

Green Space

Public back green belt. Urban design company Broadway Malyan is the latest body to urge the government to “re-think the green belt and the protection it affords.” It says green belt land “could contribute a greater value to society through sustainable development and providing new homes.” A survey for its *Fifty Shades of Green Belt* report found that over two-thirds oppose house building on the green belt (67%). Over four-fifths support building houses on brownfield land (83%). Regardless of the public view, the authors conclude that green belt policy is “outdated” [\[a\]](#) [\[b\]](#).

Demystifying Green Infrastructure. A report from the UK Green Building Council urges the property industry to play a leading role in protecting and enhancing natural features and biodiversity in towns and cities [\[a\]](#). John Alker said:

We have to shed the image of green infrastructure as a fluffy optional extra, an additional cost or an unnecessary burden. There are a growing number of clients and developers demonstrating that green infrastructure is absolutely central to quality place-making, and that there is a clear business case for it. This has to become the norm.

Kilwood Vale in West Sussex is among the case studies in the report.

London national park. The campaign to get Greater London declared a National Park City has published a green paper for consultation [\[a\]](#) [\[p\]](#).

Places to be. In a report on parks and green space, the Fabian Society said: “The next government is going to have to find ways of keeping our green, outdoor spaces open to all during an extended period of austerity. But it’s going to have to do more than this: it needs to make them accessible arenas for active citizenship. Here is the opportunity to manage our green space in such way that empowers citizens, bolsters people’s sense of place and encourages democratic engagement.” The society is calling for a greater role for Natural England in embedding the importance of green infrastructure across government; local Green Partnership Boards; and greater engagement with citizens [\[a\]](#).

Thinking. Economist Kate Barker said local opposition to planning applications must be tackled and existing homeowners and allow new housing developments in their area “for the sake of our children.” No fan of the green belt, she said: “I think it’s important for local authorities to look at the greenbelt and whether it is still fulfilling the function of greenbelt” [\[a\]](#). In a letter to the FT, Shaun Spiers took issue with an editorial which argued that Britain should start building on its green spaces. He said that rather than further liberalising planning, it would be more effective to ensure that the current system works better, including by boosting the capacity of local planning departments [\[FT\]](#). In the Guardian, Oliver Balch asked: “Can green spaces in garden cities bring health and happiness?” [\[g\]](#).

Greening Grey Britain. The Royal Horticultural Society initiative aims to tackle “the growing number of grey spaces spreading across our communities and transform them into beautiful green places” [\[a\]](#).

Trees. Channel 4 News has filmed Network Rail contractors clearing woods at the side of the railway in Sonning Cutting, Berkshire during the bird nesting season [\[4\]](#).

Roundup. Coventry council has backed plans for 800 homes in the green belt citing “exceptional circumstances”. The final decision will be made by the secretary of state [\[P\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#) [\[L\]](#). Eric Pickles blocked plans for a business park near Coventry airport saying it would cause substantial harm to the green belt and very special circumstances do not exist [\[C\]](#) [\[a\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#) [\[L\]](#). Calverton parish council in Nottinghamshire has lost its high court bid to get a core strategy overturned on the basis that housing numbers would damage the green belt [\[LGL\]](#).

Heritage

Guidance. Historic England has published three good practice guides to planning in the historic environment. They cover local and neighbourhood plans [\[a\]](#); assessing the significance of heritage assets [\[a\]](#); and managing change within the settings of heritage assets [\[a\]](#). The guidance protects remoteness and tranquillity in the setting of heritage assets:

Because setting does not depend on public rights or ability to access it, significance is not dependent on numbers of people visiting it; this would downplay such qualitative issues as the importance of quiet and tranquillity as an attribute of setting, constraints on access such as remoteness or challenging terrain, and the importance of the setting to a local community who may be few in number.

Enterprise. Surveyor Justin Birch said that when the NPPF is combined with enterprise zones: “The significance of heritage assets appears to have fallen between the gaps, with those charged with their protection seemingly powerless to intervene” [\[bd\]](#).

Planning

Development benefits. Ministers have abandoned a plan to pilot proposals for paying residents to support new homes in their locality. This follows a lack of interest in the pilots by councils and the latest British Social Attitudes Survey which suggests the scheme would not work [P](#) [P](#).

Thinking. Researchers at UCL are calling for five ‘radical’ changes to the planning system: planning should be about well-being not just growth; planning powers must be radically devolved; the benefits of planning regulation should be recognised; land reform is essential, including local land ownership and land value capture; and the democratic deficit in planning must be tackled [U](#). The five shortlisted contenders for last years’ Wolfson garden city prize are proposing a royal commission to establish sites for garden cities. They also want local stewardship of parks and community assets, and changes to compulsory purchase laws in the new cities [P](#) [PI](#).

Design Council. Citing the Oxford City Deal as an exemplar, the council said the next government should create a kickstarter “Prosperous Places Fund” to bring about necessary development sooner. It also wants a long-term National Spatial Strategy to address major spatial decisions on housing growth, flooding, and energy and transport infrastructure [PC](#).

Vacant building credit. The government has amended planning guidance on the [controversial housing credit](#), which allows developers to reduce or avoid affordable housing contributions on vacant building conversions. Councils will now be able to block the credit on buildings that have been deliberately emptied for redevelopment or where planning permission has recently expired [C](#) [O](#).

Supermarkets. Tesco is making compensation payments to local authorities where it has abandoned proposed new stores [T](#). Stroud councillors ignored planner’s advice to approve a supermarket, despite the impact on the town centre and the site being located in a flood zone [P](#) [BBC](#) [itv](#).

Local plans. Mendip council said that Gladman Developments has dropped its high court challenge to the council’s local plan over the adequacy of the strategy’s housing provision [L](#) [P](#). In an unprecedented intervention, Eric Pickles has said he will review whether a housing target set by a planning inspector is too high. After a protracted process, North Somerset proposed 17,000 homes by 2026 but the inspector recommended raising the target to 20,985 [P](#).

Housing. The annual UK Housing Review examines public and private sector housebuilding, and economic aspects of the housing market, including government support and benefits [C](#) [U](#) [IH](#) [C](#). There were 23.4 million dwellings in England on 31 March 2014, an increase of 137,000 (0.59%) on 2013 [C](#).

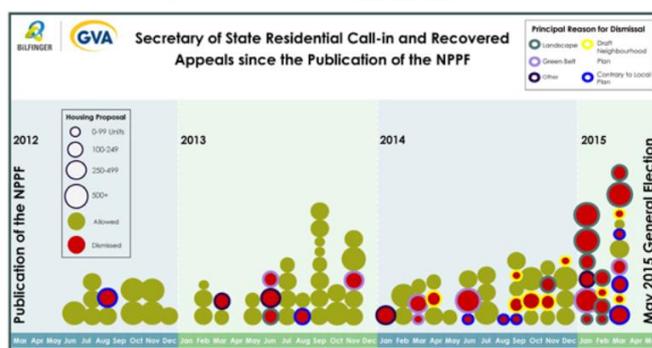
Planning Appeals

Appeals must have regard to countryside. Housing minister Brandon Lewis wrote to planning inspectorate saying appeal decisions should recognise the “the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside” and ensure “development is suitable for the local context” [C](#). His letter said:

I have become aware of several recent appeal cases in which harm to landscape character has been an important consideration in the appeal being dismissed. These cases are a reminder of one of the 12 core principles at paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework – that plans and decisions should take into account the different roles and character of different areas, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside – to ensure that development is suitable for the local context.”

Officers may clear appeal delays. Planning appeals are being delayed as the planning inspectorate struggles to cope with a growing workload and a shortage of inspectors. Last December, there were over 500 appeals beyond the 26 week target to decision. The inspectorate is recruiting more than 50 additional inspectors. It is also considering “utilising our planning officers in decision making [to] free up inspectors to deal with more complex casework”, and calling the officers “assistant planning inspectors” [C](#) [C](#).

More houses blocked. Property consultants GVA said that Eric Pickles has refused a bigger proportion of housing schemes in the first three months of the year, blocking 9,200 homes [P](#) [IH](#) [C](#).



Red dots are refused schemes (GVA)

Green corridor saved. Eric Pickles backed his planning inspector and threw out plans for 600 canal-side homes and a marina in Salford to protect local Greenway policies. He said: “Complete obliteration of a section of the Greenway and its consequent fragmentation and loss of continuity is a high price to pay for making a very small contribution towards meeting the housing shortfall.” He concluded that if the scheme went ahead “there would be fundamental harm to the Greenway’s openness and to its value as an amenity, recreation and wildlife corridor” [C](#) [C](#).

AONB defended. Eric Pickles agreed with his planning inspector and blocked plans for 160 homes on the edge of Stow-on-the-Wold. He noted that Cotswold council lacks a five year land supply and the scheme “is not alien to the local landscape”. But:

The loss of transitional Farmed Slopes resulting from the extension of the built development of Stow down the slope toward the pastoral lowlands of the Vale would erode the character of the landscape and also the hill top character of the settlement for which it is known.

He concluded that the proposal “would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the AONB and the setting of Stow” .

Brownfield first. A planning inspector rejected plans for 70 homes on the edge of Cricklade, Wiltshire saying the council has a five year land supply and the identified need should be met by small brownfield sites in line with the NPPF, not through a large greenfield development. The inspector said: “The fields which constitute the appeal site may not be of special landscape value, but are nevertheless an intrinsic and attractive part of the rural surroundings of Cricklade... I consider the proposals would fail to protect the countryside around Cricklade, and would not promote clear development plan objectives to promote self-containment of Local Service Centres and reduce out-commuting to other towns”  .

Bale house demolition ordered. Eric Pickles has rejected his inspector’s recommendation to allow a three-year temporary planning permission for a mock-Tudor castle constructed and hidden behind hay bales for four years. Mr Pickles said: “Taken as a whole, the development causes serious harm to the openness of the green belt and detracts from the rural character and appearance of most of its surroundings.” He said the case for an agricultural worker living permanently on the site had not been made . The farmer has now been ordered by local planning officers to tear down the building. Reigate and Banstead council said it has a duty to protect the green belt and the house must come down within 90 days. The owner said demolition would be like Rembrandt ripping up a masterpiece   .

Permitted Development Rights

Summary. On 15 April, the government introduced a number of new permitted development rights. Changes to national planning practice guidance and appeal decisions have also clarified that the NPPF has a limited role in decisions on prior approval, which councils must give before permitted development can proceed. The changes permit more rural development and significantly restrict the range of objections that can be made to proposed permitted development. In better news, the government has not extended permitted development rights for office to residential conversions as expected.

Conversions. Storage and distribution buildings can now be changed to residential use under permitted development rights. Planning permission will now be required for change of use to betting offices and payday loan shops. It had been widely anticipated that the government would extend the temporary regime of office to residential rights but without fanfare, it did not do so. The current arrangements will now expire in 2016 .

Agricultural permitted development rights. There has been clarification on barn conversions through national planning practice guidance .

More rural dwellings. Previously, the inclusive total of dwellings allowed on an established agricultural site had been three, now it is three under permitted development plus any established dwellings .

Structural change. Agricultural buildings must be structurally strong enough to be converted. They cannot be all but demolished or new structural elements built without planning permission .

Sustainability. Councils are no longer allowed to consider whether agricultural conversions are in a sustainable location, only whether “the location and siting of the building would make it impractical or undesirable to change use to a house” . Local plan policies restricting development in the countryside do not apply: “That an agricultural building is in a location where the local planning authority would not normally grant planning permission for a new dwelling is not a sufficient reason for refusing prior approval.” The **NPPF mantra** that the benefits and adverse impacts of a development must be assessed against the “framework taken as a whole” does not apply to permitted development .

‘Sliding Doors’ barn conversion. A twin appeal for the same barn conversion near Daventry in Northamptonshire illustrates how an application can be refused under the NPPF as unsustainable but be approved under permitted development rights . The first appeal was under the Town and Country Planning Act. The inspector ruled that **paragraph 55** of the NPPF, which promotes sustainable development in rural areas, applied and rejected the barn conversion saying it would not be sustainable development. The second appeal for a near identical conversion for the same building under permitted development rights was allowed. The inspector ruled that paragraph 55 did not apply and the sustainability of the location was irrelevant.

The limits of the NPPF. Eric Pickles approved conversion of workshops at **Utopia Village**, Primrose Hill, London into flats. His decision makes clear that for permitted development, councils can only take into account those parts of the NPPF that are relevant to the prior approval, not the framework as a whole. Matters such as overlooking and residential amenity cannot be taken into account unless human rights are breached  .

Neighbourhood Planning

Gladman Developments has withdrawn its appeal court bid to overturn the Winslow Neighbourhood Plan. The small Bucks town has seen repeated applications, appeals and high court challenges from Gladman over its neighbourhood plan, which was made (adopted) by Aylesbury Vale council last September after a 98% ‘yes’ vote. The developer was appealing a high court decision which upheld Eric Pickles’ refusal of 211 greenfield homes outside the development boundary set in the neighbourhood plan. Aylesbury Vale council said: “This is fantastic news for the residents of Winslow. A huge amount of work went into drawing up the plan by the Winslow community and the withdrawal of this challenge removes any doubt over the status of the plan when making decisions on planning applications in the area it covers” [P](#) [BT](#) [AV](#) [BC](#).

Neighbourhood plans. Eric Pickles has withdrawn from a high court case which challenged his decision to block 100 homes in Staffordshire because the development predetermined an emerging neighbourhood plan. The developer’s appeal will now be reheard [P](#). Bracknell News looked at the Ascot and Sunning neighbourhood plan one year on. Councillor Bateson said: “What’s important is it’s for the community... It’s definitely having an impact when it comes to decisions” [L](#).

Pollution

Litter. The New Local Government Network is researching into promoting behavioural change that could encourage people to bin litter rather than dump it [C](#). Country Life has highlighted what it calls “terrifying statistics” for litter across the UK. The magazine is calling for better education; a hike in business rates for takeaways to pay for cleaning up; a national clean-up day; local council targets; and a polluter pays principle [C](#). Volunteers on the Isle of Wight collected 22 bags of rubbish from East Cowes Beach [C](#). Winchester residents have launched a petition against growing litter around the city [HC](#) [38](#).

Air pollution ruling. The supreme court has unanimously ordered the government to submit new air quality plans to the European Commission no later than 31 December 2015. The judges said: “The new government should be left in no doubt as to the need for immediate action” [C](#). ClientEarth, which brought the case welcomed the verdict [C](#):

This ruling will benefit everyone’s health but particularly children, older people and those with existing health conditions like asthma and heart and lung conditions. The next government is now legally bound to take urgent action.

A government spokeswoman responded: “Air quality has improved significantly in recent years... It has always been the government’s position to submit these plans before the end of this year” [S](#).

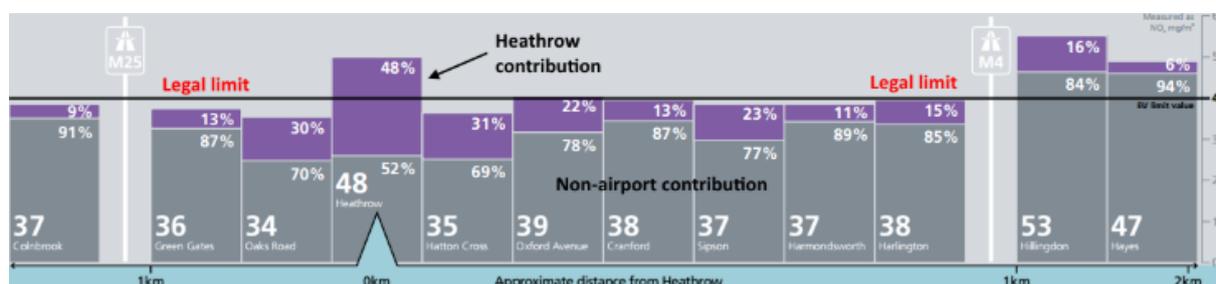
Road impact. Planning lawyer Angus Walker says the court ruling may also affect major road proposals in the forty air quality zones that currently exceed EU NO2 limits [DE](#). In London, protest group **No to Silvertown Tunnel** said: “This judgment is a wake-up call for politicians at all levels... who have ignored air pollution and backed roadbuilding schemes” [L](#).

Heathrow impact. The supreme court ruling could have a major impact on the case for a new runway at Heathrow. The airport already breaches NO2 limits and now may need to step up proposed mitigation measures. The Airports Commission may also need to review the cost benefit case for a third Heathrow runway [C](#) [i](#). Unsurprisingly, Gatwick claimed the court ruling could be a ‘showstopper’ for Heathrow expansion. Protest group HACAN agreed. Heathrow airport managers played down the ruling saying: “The airport is a small but material contributor to air pollution levels in the area. By far the greatest contribution arises from non-airport traffic and background levels of air pollution” [X](#) [C](#) [C](#).

Heathrow pollution. Ahead of the Airports Commission report of the election, and neatly timed for the supreme court ruling, Heathrow has issued a ten-point plan to improve air quality. Its proposals include ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ), and ambitions to reduce emissions from aircraft, cars and buses, including by promoting electric vehicles [C](#) [C](#). A report sponsored by Gatwick Airport says that air pollution from roads around an expanded Heathrow would breach EU NO2 limits and undermines the viability of a new runway [C](#) [C](#) [GWL](#) [C](#). Heathrow’s chief John Holland-Kaye says he would look at scrapping night flights altogether were it a condition for expansion to be allowed [GWL](#) [ES](#).

Light pollution. University of Exeter researchers said growing use of lights in UK docks and harbours is disrupting crucial marine ecosystems [L](#).

Below: Heathrow air pollution.



Transport

Noise pollution blocks City Airport plan. Boris Johnson has blocked the £200 million expansion of London City Airport approved by Newham Council in February [C][Q]. His spokesman said: “The Mayor believes that granting planning permission for this scheme would lead to an unacceptable increase in noise for East Londoners and would not be for the greater benefit of the city... The Mayor continues to believe that a new hub airport to the east of London is the only long-term option.” London City Airport said it was “perplexed and disappointed” [X].

Gatwick. The leaders of Wandsworth, Croydon, Kingston and Southwark councils published a joint letter in the Evening Standard backing Gatwick expansion, saying it would bring high quality transport infrastructure south of the Thames [LC].

Clutter. Plans for a radical overhaul of road signage have been delayed after the government ran out of time in the last parliament [S].

Solar Farms

Rules tightened. Just before parliament was prorogued, Eric Pickles issued a statement on planning matters [C]. Noting that there have been concerns about large scale solar farms on good agricultural land, he told MPs:

*We want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the **best and most versatile agricultural land** would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.*

Planning experts described this as a “pretty striking test” and are suggesting that the clarification could result in formal sequential testing for solar farms. In such a test developers will have to show that no suitable sites are available on poorer quality or brownfield land before proceeding [P].

Britain tops solar league. According to Wiki-Solar, Britain has more large solar farms than any other country. Britain has 408 installations that cover 25 acres or more. The United States has 553 large solar farms, Spain 172 and France 91. In the three months to the end of March, 2GW was installed here, bringing Britain up to 8GW capacity – twice the capacity of Drax. A further 299 solar farms have consent but many may not be built due to changes in subsidy regimes [T].

Hampshire. Eric Pickles has placed a holding direction on planning approval for a 48MW 150-acre solar farm at Eveley Farm, Houghton. Plans for a larger array at the site had previously been rejected by Test Valley council, but this scheme was approved by councillors against officers’ advice. Solar giant Kronos has promised to drop an appeal on the larger scheme if permission is given. There is local support for the scheme but opponents accuse the council of rushing the permission through [L][Q].

Energy and Recycling

Plastic bags. Despite opposition from the UK, the European Parliament agreed that member states must take measures to ensure that average yearly use does not exceed 90 lightweight bags per citizen by 2019 and 40 by 2025; or to ensure that, by 2018, lightweight bags are not handed to shoppers free of charge [R]. Amid concerns that existing estimates of plastic packaging used in the UK are too high, the government is consulting on changes to regulations. Closes 22 May [C][Q].

Warm and Green. A report from CPRE says the countryside “will be blighted by thousands more wind and solar farms unless millions of homes are fully insulated to reduce energy use.” It says making heat and power supplies cleaner will not do enough to tackle climate change. There needs to be a greater focus on conserving energy and reducing demand in order to reduce emissions. One scenario in the report suggests that without adequate insulation, 3,500 new wind turbines, including 800 onshore and 8,000 hectares of new solar panels would be needed, while half of England would also need to be planted with crops that can be used to produce energy. CPRE is calling for a much bolder national programme to reduce energy and carbon emissions from homes and community buildings, and for stronger zero-carbon standards for new homes. It also wants rural areas to get a fairer share of funding for home improvements [CPRE][SA][YP]. Consumer watchdog Which? criticised the collective failure of successive governments to tackle energy efficiency [G][Q].

The public and climate change. The proportion of people who think climate change is mainly or entirely due to human activity has risen to 40%, up from 35% last year, according to a government survey of attitudes to climate change. The public continues to back renewables, especially solar, but fewer people rate climate change as one of top three issues facing Britain. More at Carbon Brief [CB].

Wind. Ecotricity has failed at the appeal court in its attempt to overturn a decision by Eric Pickles to reject four wind turbines West Huntspill, Somerset [L][P]. In Rotterdam, architects are planning a wind turbine you can live in [Q] (below).



Nuclear waste has been brought into the Planning Act regime, meaning applications will be treated as a nationally significant infrastructure project. Friends of the Earth criticised the move saying: “Decisions mustn’t be taken away from local people who have to live with the impacts” [G](#) [P](#).

Oil and gas. UK Oil & Gas Investments claimed there could be up to 100 billion barrels of oil onshore beneath the South of England. Although only a fraction of this total would be recovered, the company said: “We think we’ve found a very significant discovery here, probably the largest [onshore] in the last 30 years, and we think it has national significance” [BBC](#) [G](#) [KO](#). A few days later, after pressure from the stock market, the company backtracked saying: “The company has not undertaken work outside of its licence areas sufficient to comment on the possible oil in place in either the approximate 1,100 sq. miles or the whole of the Weald Basin” [BBC](#) [T](#) [L](#). Durham University said the South Downs, North York Moors, Peak District, South Downs and Yorkshire Dales national parks have rocks for suitable for holding shale gas, shale oil or coal bed methane [WST](#).

Communities and Campaigning

Poverty. The Rural Services Network warned that 17% of rural households are now officially in poverty. Residents in urban areas benefit by £178 a head more in public spending [YP](#).

Information gain. In a ruling that may have implications for other utilities, a tribunal has declared water companies are public authorities for the purpose of environmental information requests. This means that campaigning groups will be able to obtain data on planning and environmental activities of water companies under rules akin to those of freedom of information legislation [I](#).

People. Craig Bennett is Friends of the Earth’s new chief executive officer [O](#). Farmer Douglas Chalmers is the new head of the Friends of the Lake District, which represents CPRE in the area [I](#). Fiona Howie, former head of planning at CPRE, is now chief executive of the Campaign for National Parks [NP](#).

Berkshire and Bucks

Reading. Plans for three ‘American style’ residential towers up to 28-storeys in height in Reading have been rejected by councillors [BBC](#). Proposals for a new railway station and bus interchange at Green Park are set to be renewed after permission expired [Gr](#).

Aldermaston Manor. Plans have been submitted for 247 homes within the historic grounds of Aldermaston Manor Park. The plans are ‘enabling development’ to allow the 1848 Grade II-listed manor house and lodge to be renovated for residential use. A 1980s office block that dominates the lakeside landscape will be removed [L](#) [I](#) [HC](#).



Aldermaston Manor and the housing plans

Housing. Gladman Developments is planning 200 homes near Stoke Mandeville hospital. The company told residents: “We all know and accept that more housing is needed and a stance of ‘put it elsewhere’ will result in not enough housing being built” [M](#) [I](#). Residents of Water Eaton in Milton Keynes are angry that a developer is proposing to build 1,900 homes on ancient farmland at Eaton Leys, adjacent to the floodplain of the Great River Ouzel [MKW](#).

Hampshire

Winchester. The developer behind a £165 million development in the town centre has vowed to fight on despite the court of appeal rejecting its bid to overturn a high court decision that procurement for the scheme was unlawful [bd](#).

Renewables. Hampshire Renewable Energy Co-op is promoting 10% community ownership of a proposed 64 acre solar farm between Bishop’s Waltham and Waltham Chase [I](#). The planning inquiry into the Bullington Cross wind farm begins on 21 October [L](#). A planning application has been submitted for 200 solar panels on farmland near Droxford within the South Downs National Park [HC](#).

Bridleway row. The Meon Valley Railway Line Users Group is planning to take legal action against Hampshire council, which it says has laid a rough, dangerous surface without planning permission along the bridleway. The new surface is apparently encouraging cars and bikes despite a legal ban and is unsuitable for horses [HC](#) [HC](#). More than 200 people turned out to at a protest meeting. They argued the £380,000 resurfacing work was unnecessary and urbanises the route [L](#) [L](#) [HC](#).

Musical protest. Persimmon is proposing 135 houses in the green strategic gap between Portchester and Fareham. The children of Wicor Primary School have produced a video in which they sing in protest against the plans to build the homes next to their school [L](#) [YT](#).



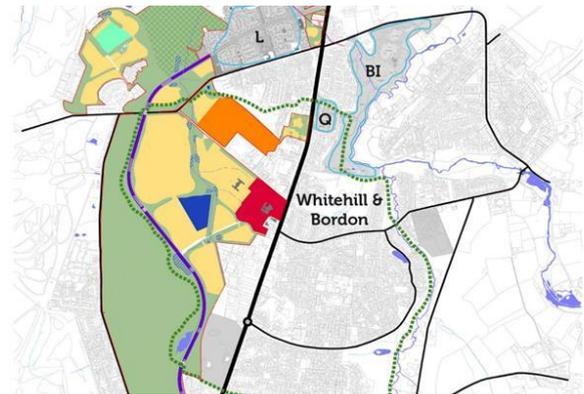
Whitehill & Bordon

Eco town gets go ahead. East Hampshire council has approved a planning application for 2,400 new homes and a new town centre for Whitehill & Bordon. With existing planning approval, the development on former MoD land will result in a total of 3,350 new homes and 5,500 new jobs. The plans for the eco town, include Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) on a former army training area [24](#) [LG](#). Whitehill & Bordon was launched as one of Labour’s eco-towns. The communities department has since awarded it Housing Zone status and it has been designated one of five ‘step up towns’ by the Enterprise M3 local enterprise partnership.

Trust. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation says it will create a community development trust [LG](#):

The aims of the community development trust are to ensure the effective implementation of key local strategies including heritage, recreation and arts and culture; initiate, coordinate and deliver community development and cultural activities to create a thriving integrated community; encourage a green lifestyle amongst residents and businesses; and own, maintain and effectively manage the endowed community land and buildings.

The Green Vision for the town aims to develop a thriving sustainable community with a distinct character and: “Create a town that encourages us to live and work in ways that do not waste the natural resources on which our society and economy depend.” The vision seeks to improve the built environment of the town so that it complements the superb landscape surroundings, the vision wants to: “Create an attractive built environment where people want to live, work, shop and play, with a balanced mix of housing, community facilities, and commercial and employment opportunities” [LG](#).



Plans for Whitehill & Bordon

Kent

Kent developers aired their views on the planning system, blaming the election for slowing down planning permissions and the government for allowing councils to control housebuilding. They say that appeal decisions have become political [KO](#).

Urban Gravesham has dropped its legal battle against a £125m redevelopment of part of the town’s heritage quarter [BBC](#).

Waterside Park. The **Bearsted and Thurnham Society** is urging residents to attend the public inquiry into the proposed development, which begins on 6 May [KO](#).



Plans for Waterside Park

Police object. Kent police have objected to a 41 home scheme in Upchurch, Swale, which they say does not comply with the NPPF. The force said: “There is evidence that an increase in population arising from new developments results in an increase in crime and disorder.” The police want £316 for each house built [KO](#).

Sussex



Plans for Western Heights

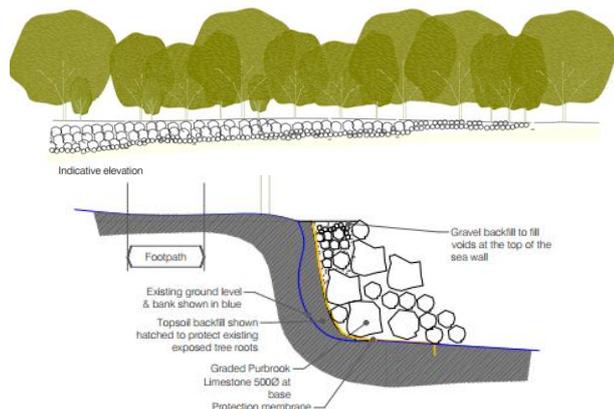
Dover. CPRE Kent is considering legal action to overturn planning permission for the Dover Western Heights development. Brian Lloyd said: “The site was never in the Dover Local Plan and it is an example of how major developments can get through... We are seeking legal advice to see whether there are any grounds for us to mount a legal challenge and have until mid-May to decide” [KO](#).

Oxfordshire

Housing. Taylor Wimpey has been given planning permission for 158 homes in Abingdon, despite a three-year campaign against by residents, councillors and the local MP [OM](#). In Oxford plans have been given outline planning permission for 300 new homes in Littlemore, half affordable, after the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust agreed to improved cycle links and reserve some homes for NHS staff [OM](#).

Surrey

Roundup. Oxted and Limpsfield Residents’ Group is angry about limited consultation on the Tandridge strategic housing market assessment [L](#). Elmbridge councillors unanimously opposed plans for a waste treatment works in Walton after an environmental health report raised odour fears [GS](#). A high court judge backed Spelthorne council which had ordered a naturist club to remove buildings erected without planning permission [P](#).



Plans for sea wall at Rookwood House

Local plans. The South Downs National Park’s planning committee has endorsed the direction of the current local plan policy. The plan is for 4,400 homes by 2032, 1,800 of which will be affordable. The park authority says the housing targets are based on a landscape led approach, including analysis of viewpoints and tranquillity mapping [SNP](#) [itv](#). Petworth town council has begun work on a neighbourhood plan [MAPO](#). Chichester council said it will defend the Loxwood Neighbourhood Plan, following a second legal challenge by Crown Hall Estates which has meant the referendum planned for 7 May has been postponed. The council has allocated up to £30,000 for the challenge [MAPO](#) [LG](#).

Crowborough town council is to survey half the town’s households to examine the need of housing. Peter Kay for CPRE Sussex said demand for housing was being driven by commuters moving into the town. “The issue for Crowborough is should it expand into the surrounding countryside and the key fact that is limiting its expansion is its proximity to the Ashdown Forest and AONB. The CPRE does not support that” [L](#).

Housing developments. There are accusations of a planning meeting descending into “chaos” as a scheme to build 5 homes in Graffham was first rejected by councillors and then passed back to officers for a decision [MAPO](#). East Wittering and Bracklesham parish council has withdrawn its objection to a 50-home scheme in the hope of having a stronger defence against a 110-home proposal [L](#).

Kate’s sea wall opposed. Natural England and the Chichester Harbour Conservancy have recommended that Chichester council refuses a planning application for a 170m sea wall designed to protect Kate Winslet’s home at Rookford House, Witterings [L](#) [i](#) [R](#). The wall would be built in Purbeck stone rip-rap. Natural England said: “The application site falls within land which is protected as a special area of conservation, special protection area, Ramsar wetlands and site of special scientific interest.” The Conservancy says it is unconvinced about the need for a sea defence and it is concerned about impact on the AONB and the Ramsar site. The Environmental Agency says it has no objections to the scheme [LG](#).

The CPRE eBulletins

CPRE South East eBulletin is independently written and edited by Andy Boddington: cprenews@andybodders.co.uk. Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE.

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